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coverers—the barks and pinnaces of the days of Queen Elizabeth—the Dutch galleots—the English men-of-war—our own schooners, clippers, steamboats, flat-boats and Indian canoes. Many of these are peculiarly American and suggestive in their associations. An artist of genius and invention, imbued with national ideas, would find no difficulty in introducing all of them in an appropriate and picturesque way into decorations suitable for a room devoted to naval affairs. Our warlike and our peaceful triumphs on the water, from the battles of Paul Jones to the successful race of the yacht *America*, could be thus commemorated in a fitting manner, together with every navigating characteristic of the nation, from a Hudson river raft to a Mississippi steamboat. We have plenty of marine painters, competent to the task, who would be glad to exert their powers in embellishing such a room. And, brief as the period of our history is, no people of modern times have furnished during their national existence ampler or more varied materials for the proper treatment of such a subject. How the Italian painter, to whom the job of decorating the Capitol has been committed, at so much a day, has seen fit to embellish the Naval Committee-room of the American Senate, may be comprehended by the following document, which is conspicuously posted up in the aforesaid room, for the edification of visitors :

"SENATE COMMITTEE ON NAVAL AFFAIRS.—The decorative paintings of this room are a specimen of the manner in which the ancient Greeks and Romans ornamented their splendid buildings, some of which are still extant in the precious monuments of Pompeii and the baths of Titus. America, with the sea divinities, are painted on the ceiling in real fresco. These mythological figures are delineated agreeably to the poetical descriptions we have received of them, and they are Neptune, the god of the seas, Amphitrite, his wife, Æolus keeping the winds chained to the rocks, Venus the daughter of the sea, Oceanus, with cramp-fish claws on his head, Thetis, his wife, and Nereus, the father of the Nereids, drawn by Glacus, and the Tritons by marine horses or swans, or else mounted on sea-monsters."

This is equal to the groves of Blarney, where Venus, and Nicodemus, and Nebuchadnezzar, and the other "haythen" gods and goddesses, might be seen standing naked all in the open air. It is a conception about up, or rather down, to the level of a tenth-rate artist in some obscure provincial town of Italy, where the progress of taste, as of everything else, was

a century behind the world. But what business has such vulgar and obsolete and ridiculous trash on the walls of a committee-room in the American Capitol? What have we to do with sea divinities with cramp-fish claws on their heads, or with Tritons, and Nereids, and marine horses? A representation of horse marines would be more to the purpose, and quite as significant and sensible.

The adjoining room—that of the Committee on Military Affairs—is somewhat better, inasmuch as it contains representations of the implements of modern warfare, which are appropriate enough; but it also contains two large frescoes of the battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill, badly painted, and showing at a glance that they are the work of foreigners, to whom the countenances, the costumes, and the character of the men of the men of the Revolution were not familiar. They have no nationality about them; whereas nationality is, above all things, to be desired in decorating the National Capitol.

The same foreign element prevails in all the decorations, so far as they have yet been executed. In the Agricultural Committee-room, for instance, which is one of the show-rooms, there is a picture of Cincinnatus summoned from his farm to take charge of the Roman State, and a counterpart representing Putnam receiving the news of the battle of Lexington, as he was ploughing in the field. The whole tone of the latter picture is Italian, not American. The landscape, the grouping, the attitudes, and the expression, are of the Roman Campagna, and not of Connecticut, as they should be. The foreign artist has done his best, with the aid of native pictures and engravings, to make the thing American, but he has succeeded no better than a Chinese artist succeeds in copying a Western painting. He copies with the most minute fidelity, but his work has still an inevitable strangeness of tone and feeling.

The responsibility for this defacement of the Capitol rests, I am sorry to learn, upon Captain Meigs, the engineer in charge of the Capitol extension. I have heretofore defended him in the *Tribune* from the attacks that were made upon the new Hall of Representatives. That Hall, after six months' daily observation and use of it, I maintain to be as well adapted to its purpose as any Hall well can be. For that, and for the general construction of the Capitol extension, Captain Meigs

deserves high credit. He is a man of intelligence and of unimpeachable integrity, who has most faithfully executed the important duties which have been committed to his charge. But his approbation or toleration of the montrosities under the name of Art, which are being perpetrated under his eyes, shows that he has not the taste nor the cultivation which might entitle him to absolute and unquestioned direction of the decorations of the buildings. Such direction he has assumed. Throughout the Capitol in the matter of art his will is law, and no man is suffered to touch a brush who does not conform implicitly to that will. Our native artists of distinction, with reputations at stake, will not submit to the dictation of a man who may be a good engineer, but who is certainly no artist, and who just as certainly has no taste for art. The consequence is, that the Capitol is in the hands of a crowd of inferior and needy foreigners, who paint what they are told to paint at so much a day for their work. If this is suffered to go on the Capitol will be for ages the laughing-stock of the cultivated world. Congress can and should remedy the evil by appointing a connoisseur to superintend the decoration of the public buildings.

REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER OF AMERICAN ARTISTS.

FLORENCE, ITALY, April, 1858.

THE artists of America are here the representatives of America—its historians, champions, entire interpreters. Sculptors and painters speak a dialect which every nation alike understands. Art speaks to the world. With neither voice nor language, its sound goes out into all lands. It is Greenough, and Crawford, and Powers, and Hart, therefore, who are teaching Italy—and eastern and central Europe, through the hundreds of titled Germans and Russians who visit Florence and Rome—not only that America has great artists, which they see when they see *them*—but that she has warriors, and statesmen, and jurists; and yet more, that she herself, though a republic, is sometimes a grateful one—who honors patriot citizens with distinctions of voluntary homage, such as in these countries are

raised but by arbitrary power, and to none scarcely but those of royal rank. It is in the studios of American artists that much of Europe has received its grandest impression of even Washington himself, and that it now first hears and pronounces the names of Patrick Henry, of Marshall, of Lee, of Webster, and of Clay. Greenough led the way in the heroic statue of Washington, which sits before the Capitol. The lamented Crawford followed in the group ordered by Virginia, when—as it was seen at Rome—the Old Dominion awakened, for the first time, an interest in Italy and central Europe, such as all her patriotic history had never awakened before. This noble service of art and artists is still going on; and now that the liberality of Boston, Richmond, and New-Orleans, has given commissions to Powers and to Hart for statues of Webster and of Clay, the names, both of these cities and of these statesmen of the New World, are becoming familiar in courts and palaces, and are raising inquiries everywhere, whether America is about to bestow upon art the patronage under which alone art can flourish, and which, thus far, Europe has thought that it was the privilege of kings and nobles to bestow. I say it is from American studios in Florence, and Munich, and Dresden, and Rome—from European centres rather than from the American circumference—that the names, and services, and writings of American statesmen are first beginning to radiate through inner Europe. Forty years of splendid civil service, such as no statesman—your own great Hamilton excepted—ever rendered to America, did not suffice to make the name of Daniel Webster heard upon these shores of ancient and of classic freedom; and a hundred volumes of biography and eulogy would not have caused such animated interest in his career and character among the intellectual, and educated, and titled classes which Europe sends down from all its cities to worship at the shrine of Italy, as the single statue of him which now stands in the studio of Powers. People from all parts of Europe have visited it, and have seen the mighty statesman as the Senate saw him in his life. They look and contemplate in silence. They are awed into respect and interest by the majesty of that august presence which we almost believe—as we stand before this image—that the artist's power has restored again to earth. You need not tell the stranger that Webster was a great

man—a statesman such as Europe has never seen. The sculptor has told them this, and much more, already. They inquire now about that 'Constitution' of which he was 'the Defender.' They ask about Hayne, about Jackson; about New-Hampshire, and Massachusetts, and Dartmouth College. 'Has Marshfield been well engraved,' they say; 'and the house in which the great American was born?' A revelation of something new has been made to them—they have been raised to lofty conceptions of America—they are inspired by animated interest in its Constitution, and they wish to know every particular of the history and greatness of such a man. Deeply impressed with the genius of Webster, they pass from the studio of Powers in the Via Maggio to that of Hart in the Piazza Maria Antonio—now becoming the centre of Florentine fashion—and here before them stands in like colossal grandeur the image of Henry Clay. Genius shines throughout all its lineaments. The character of a remarkable man is revealed; such a one as 'these valleys and rocks never heard.' The western orator is before them. The devotion of millions of freemen—for *lustrum* after *lustrum*—to his name and person, has hardly carried his fame beyond his native shores. It is Hart who now first teaches thousands of 'the vulgar great,' in Europe, that such a man as Henry Clay has even lived; and that empires, and kingdoms, and duchies, which deem themselves the most enlightened, and educated, and refined of the whole world, have reposed in profound ignorance of a statesman, who, by the force of character and talent alone, often guided the course of a nation, and of an orator to whose accents, during half a century, tens of thousands have listened with enchantment and delight."

Thus writes a correspondent of the "Home Journal." Its statements and inferences have had repeated confirmation, from the date of the publication, in the "Boston Miscellany," (1841,) of Hon. Edward Everett's Letters from Italy, to the present time; all who go abroad come home with a more exalted respect for our artists than was felt previous to an acquaintance with the European view of things. We should be proud of such representative men; but fear the great majority of their countrymen fail to ac-

cord them the honor due. Augustus Cæsar Jackson goes abroad to "represent" the country in the honorable capacity of minister; he has no capacity for his honors or his office, makes a great misrepresentation of the intelligence and general character of the American people, proves himself an ass, and comes home covered with self-conceit if not with foreign honors; and thereafter is toasted, feasted, salaamed, courted by society, for "he has represented this country at the court of —!" But the great artist may come and go unheralded, unnoticed; the really true representative of our national nobility of heart and mind, in the Courts of the great centres of European civilization and refinement, he is "honored" with neglect by the masses of our people—with an occasional commission from some association, or State Executive, or discerning man of wealth, who generally manage to get twice or thrice the worth of their money. It may be that this state of affairs will prevail for many years to come, but we think not. The growing interest felt in Mr. Powers' works, the respect paid to the lamented Crawford's memory, the greater number of commissions yearly going out to our artists, laboring under the very shadow of the immortal masters' creations, the increased attention of States to the claims of their dead patriots, the gradual increase, throughout the Union, of art-taste, all give good grounds for the hope that our artists shall not be without honor in their own country, but shall receive the praise and patronage to which their merits as artists and as men entitle them.

REMBRANDT PEALE ON THE WASHINGTON PORTRAITS.



THE venerable Rembrandt Peale lectured on the original portraits of Washington, on the evening of Monday, February 22d, before the Historical Society of New-York City.

It was listened to by a very large audience. The personal reminiscences of the veteran artist were deeply interesting, though no new facts were introduced beside those already familiar to our readers through the article in the December JOURNAL on the same subject. As we have sought to give correct information on